Lekhah Dodi:  
The Most Famous Jewish Love Poem  

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A. Lekhah Dodi of R. Shlomo Alkabetz

Chorus: Come/Go, my Beloved, to greet the bride/
Let us welcome the presence of Shabbat.

1) “Keep” and “remember” in one act of speech/ The unique God made us hear/ YHVH is one and His name is one/ For fame, for glory and for praise.

2) To greet Shabbat come let us go/ For she is the source of blessing/ From the beginning, as of old, she was anointed/ Last in deed, first in thought.

3) Sanctuary of the King, royal city/ Rise up, go forth from the upheaval/ Too long have you dwelt in the valley of tears/ He will show compassion to you.

4) Shake yourself off, rise up from the dust/ Put on the clothes of glory, my people/ Through the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite/ Draw near to my soul and redeem it.

5) Wake up, wake up/ For your light has come, let my light rise up/ Awaken, awaken, speak a poem/ YHVH’s glory is revealed upon you.
6) Do not be ashamed, do not be humiliated/ Why are you downcast, Why are you disconsolate/ In you the needy of My people will find shelter/ And the city shall be rebuilt on its hill.

7) May those who oppress you be oppressed/ And may those who devour you be far away/ Your God will rejoice over you/ As a bridegroom rejoices over a bride.

8) Right and left shall you break out/ And you will praise YHVH/ Through the descendent of Peretz (lit. “the one who broke out”)/ We shall rejoice and be glad.

9) Come in peace, crown of her husband/ Both with joy and jubilation/ Among the faithful of the treasured people/ Come bride, come bride.
B. *Lekhah Dodi* printed in Seder Ha-Yom

Afterward is said a *pizmon* (poem with a refrain) or two. Here they are:

_Chorus:_ Come, my Beloved, to greet the bride/
Let us welcome the presence of Shabbat.

1) “Remember” and “Keep” in one act of speech/ The unique king gave to us/ YHVH is One and His name is One/ For fame, for glory and for prayer. *Come my beloved…*

2) The holiness of the Shabbat You bequeathed to us/ And on Mt. Sinai You drew us close/ With Torah and _Mitzvot_ You crowned us/ And called us a treasured nation.

3) We are thankful to You, our God/ For You brought us out of Egypt/ And redeemed us from the house of bondage/ Through the strength of Your great hand.

4) You Led us in the midst of _Yam Suf_/ You caused us to rejoice in the downfall of the enemy/ Life and love you have done for us/ to lead us through the depths.

5) You are God of gods/ Who is like You among gods/ Lowering the prideful ones who aggrandize/ And raising up the poor to greatness.

6) Come in peace, crown of her husband/ Both with joy and jubilation/ Among the faithful of the treasured people/ *Come bride, come bride.*
Come bride, come bride, come to peace, Queen Shabbat.

And say: “Mizmor, A song for the Day of Shabbat, etc.”

(Psalm 92).

1) You are the God who works wonders/ You took us out of prison/ You caused us to inherit a full house/ a fair and praiseworthy land. Come, my Beloved...

1. Talmudic source of Kabbalat Shabbat

Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 119a

Rabbi Hanina would wrap himself in a cloak on erev Shabbat and say: “Come, let’s go out and greet Shabbat the Queen.”

Rabbi Yannai would wear (new) clothes on erev Shabbat and say: “Come bride, come bride.”

2. Talmudic source of Kabbalat Shabbat II

Babylonian Talmud Bava Kama 32a-b

Rabbi Hanina would say: “Come, let’s go out to greet the Queen bride,” and some say (another version): “…to greet Shabbat, the Queen bride.” Rabbi Yannai would wrap himself, stand and say: “Come bride, come bride.”

3. Kabbalistic practice of greeting Shabbat


A number of groups go out on erev Shabbat while it is still day, wearing white, and receive the presence of Shabbat and read
Psalm 29 and the *pizmon* Lekhah Dodi, and Psalm 92, and say: “Come bride.”

4. Headline to Alkabetz’s Lekhah Dodi

**Introduction to Alkabetz Lekhah Dodi, 1584 siddur**

Afterward say this beautiful and praiseworthy poem, constructed and formulated by the divine scholar Shlomo Ha-Levi ibn Alkabetz ז’”ל in the city of Tzfat, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days. To the tune of “Return my soul to Your resting place” (Psalm 116:7).

5. Biblical source I

**Song of Songs 7:12-14**

12 Come, my beloved,
Let us go into the field;
Let us lodge among the henna shrubs/villages.

13 Let us go early to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine has flowered,
If its blossoms have opened,
If the pomegranates are in bloom.

There I will give my love to you.

14 The mandrakes (dudai’m) yield their fragrance,
At our doors are all choice fruits;
Both freshly picked and long-stored,
Have I kept, my beloved, for you.

6. Biblical source: Context
Song of Songs 2:10-13

My beloved spoke thus to me:

‘Arise my darling;
My fair one, come away!

For now the winter is past,
The rains are over and gone.

The blossoms have appeared in the land,
The time of pruning has come;
The song of the turtledove
Is heard in our land.

The green figs form on the fig tree,
The vines in blossom give off fragrance.

Arise, my darling;
My fair one, come away!

6a. Genesis Rabbah 11:8, trans. Noam Zion

R. Shimon bar Yoḥai taught: The Shabbat pleaded to the Blessed Holy One:

“Sovereign of the Universe. All the other days have a mate [three pairs of six days]; am I to be without one?”

The Holy One said to it: “The Community of Israel shall be your mate.”

So when they stood before the mountain of Sinai, He said to them, ‘Remember what I said to the Shabbat, that the Community of Israel is your partner, [hence, God reminds Israel]—Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’ (Exodus 20:8).

7. Which version of Sinai?

Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 20b
“Remember” and “Keep” were said in one act of speech.

8. Zohar Yitro 2:92b, Kimelman, p. 37, n. 24
“Shamor” is Shabbat of nighttime,
and “Zakhor” is Shabbat of daytime

9. Tikkunei Zohar 6:21b
And so “Zakhor” and “Shamor” are/represent God and the Shekhinah.

10. Why switch the order?
Deuteronomy 26:19
[God] will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised, a holy people to YHVH your God.

11. Who will have mercy?
Jeremiah 15:5
But who will pity you, O Jerusalem, and who will console you? Who will turn aside to inquire about your welfare?

12. Whose light comes?
Isaiah 60:1
Arise, shine, for your light has dawned. The presence of YHVH has shined upon you.

13. Garments of skin
Genesis 3:21
YHVH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and he clothed them.
14. Garments of light

Genesis Rabbah 20 (Albeck)

“YHVH God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin (עור), and he clothed them.

(Gen 3:21)”—In R. Meir’s Torah scroll, they found written: garments of light (אור).

15. Reduced name of God

Exodus 17:16

[Moses] said: “Hand upon the throne of God”—YHVH will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages.

16. Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 62b

When is the time of the sexual intimacy of students? Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: once every Friday night.

17. Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit 29b

[Isaac] said: “See the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of the field blessed by YHVH” (Genesis 27:27). Rav Yehudah son of Rav Shmuel bar Shilat said in the name of Rav: This was like the fragrance of a field of apples.

18. Zohar Toldot 1:142b

Like the fragrance of a field blessed by YHVH. Who is a field? Field of apple trees, desired and cultivated by supernal patriarchs (=Hesed, Gevurah and Tiferet).

19. Hemdat Yamim (1731)
Sanctuary of the King, royal city/
Rise up, go forth from the upheaval/ Too long have you
dwelt in the valley of tears/
From old it was the head of the kingdom/
And it is now crowned in kingship
He will show compassion to you.

20. I Samuel 10:5-6
Samuel said to Saul: After that, you are to go to the Hill of God where the Philistine prefects reside. There, as you enter the town, you will encounter a band of prophets coming down from the shrine, preceded by lyres, timbrels, flutes, and harps, and they will be speaking in ecstasy.

The spirit of YHVH will grip you and you will speak in ecstasy along with them; you will become another man.

II Kings 3:14-15
Elisha said, “...get me a musician.” And when the musician played, the hand of God was upon [Elisha].

21. Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 10b; cf Tosefta Arakhin
Our rabbis taught (in a baraita): There was a flute in the Temple, which was smooth and thin, and made of reed, and from the time of Moshe. The king commanded that it be overlaid with gold, but its sound was not sweet. They removed the overlay, and it became sweet as it once was. There was a cymbal in the Temple, which was made of bronze, and its sound was sweet. Then it was damaged. The sages sent it to the craftsmen of Alexandria in Egypt and they...
fixed it, but its sound was not sweet. They removed the fix, and its sound was sweet as it once was.